



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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### **South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) to Develop a Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Dolphin and Wahoo Fishery of the U.S. Atlantic Coast: Request for Comment**

Because of problems specific to the dolphin and wahoo fisheries of the U.S. Atlantic coast, the SAFMC has requested that the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) designate the SAFMC as lead for a dolphin, *Coryphaena hippurus*, and wahoo, *Acanthocybium solanderi*, FMP encompassing only the U.S. Atlantic coast (Maine to Florida). Currently, the SAFMC is the administrative lead council to a dolphin and wahoo FMP that would include joint management by the SAFMC, the Gulf of Mexico (GMFMC) and Caribbean (CFMC) Fishery Management Councils, with the New England (NEFMC) and Mid-Atlantic (MAFMC) Fishery Management Councils acting in an advisory capacity for their areas of jurisdiction.

Under the SAFMC proposal to restrict the management range of the FMP to the U.S. Atlantic coast, the NEFMC and MAFMC would maintain their advisory capacity.

Public comments are solicited concerning the SAFMC's request to forego further development of a joint FMP and allow the development of an FMP for the U.S. Atlantic coast (Maine to Florida).

**DATES:** Comments must be received no later than 4:30 p.m., eastern standard time, on December 23, 2002. See ADDRESSES at the end of this bulletin.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** On September 15, 1997, the SAFMC requested that the Secretary designate the SAFMC as lead Council to develop a fishery management plan for dolphin and wahoo. After considering the SAFMC's request and the

public comment received, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), acting on behalf of the Secretary, designated the SAFMC as the council with the administrative lead in preparing the FMP cooperatively with the GMFMC and CFMC, with the NEFMC and MAFMC acting in an advisory capacity for their areas of jurisdiction. The joint designation stemmed primarily from the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requirement to manage stocks, to the extent practicable, throughout their range. In the case of dolphin and wahoo, the ranges of these stocks extend beyond the SAFMC's area of jurisdiction.

The Councils are allowed to designate alternative management units if complementary management is planned for other geographic areas or if the unmanaged portion of the stocks are immaterial to proper management within the area under consideration for the alternate management unit, especially if designated alternate management units are specifically relevant to the FMP's objectives.

Social and economic issues are identified as the primary objectives in the proposed U.S. Atlantic FMP. The proposed FMP is not attempting to rectify a biological problem with the stocks; neither stock is overfished nor approaching an overfished condition because of overfishing. No similar economic and social issues requiring management have been identified for the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean areas. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries finds merit in the SAFMC's request to forego further development of a joint FMP, and to develop an FMP for the U.S. Atlantic coast.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the SAFMC proposal should be sent to Dr. Rolland A. Schmitten, Acting Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NMFS, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702. Comments also may be sent via fax to 727-570-5583. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Steve Branstetter, 727-570-5305.

A toll free public service line at 1-866-570-5301 contains considerable recorded information about our missions, services, and management measures. If the needed information is not available, leave a message, and we will return your call.

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